

May 20, 2011

Shannon Martin
Maine Care Services
11 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04330

Dear Ms. Martin,

We are writing to you today to express our opinions and concerns regarding the cut in funding to transportation services and specifically to ARTS (Aroostook Regional Transportation System) and County Ride. We are against any cuts to services because it would limit our lives.

We use the ARTS bus to go to go out for meals, medical appointments and socialization at the Harvest Inn Social Club. We pick up prescriptions, visit friends at their homes, go to the laundry mat, grocery and household shopping, as well as attend community events. If ARTs is unavailable, County Ride through AMHC assists with non-medical appointments.

In Aroostook County, there is no other public transportation besides ARTS. If community members wish, they can take a cab. A one way trip, in Caribou is \$5.50. With a fixed income, it will become financially impossible to access all of the needs. Also, there are no major stores in Caribou. The local Wal-Mart is 13 miles away, which is a \$22 cab fare – one way. Also in Presque Isle is Sears, JC Penny, K-mart and other large department stores. Caribou itself is limited to the “major chains” of Family Dollar and Shop and Save

Beyond the financial aspect, there is the importance of socialization. Accessing the community keeps us out of the Crisis Center. Peer interaction is crucial to our mental well being.

Aroostook County is in its own world. Most people think Northern Maine is Bangor. A call center in Portland won't understand that it is an hour ride to a mall from Fort Kent. They may not grasp that the only Maine Care Dental provider accepting new patients is in Ashland (hour ride) and some people can NOT walk to a store – because the closest gas station is seven miles away.

We are rural – but our needs are the same as everyone. We need to get to our medical appointments, we need to go to a laundry mat, and we need to shop for groceries and prescriptions. A cut in the funding of public transportation services would limit our abilities to live our lives.

Respectfully Signed,